**Nabbing of Veerappan**

139. DR. AKHILESH DAS: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) what steps have been taken by Central and State Governments to nab the forest brigand Veerappan since December, 2002 following the killing of Shri Nagappa;

(b) the success achieved in the mission; and

(c) the reasons for prolonged failure of all efforts made in this direction?

THE MINISTER OF STATE INTHE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI HARIN PATHAK): (a) to (c) Following the killing of Shri Nagappa, the State Governments of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka formulated a joint strategy for the purpose of nabbing Veerppan and reactivated the Special Task Force operations. The Central Government, after convening a meeting of both the State Governments, has provided assistance in form of arms/ ammunitions and other equipments. Besides, instructions have also been issued to provide assistance for aerial surveillance and quick transportation of troops and slithering operations at Air Station, Sulur. The Central Government has asked the Government of Karnataka to gear up ground intelligence gatherings and assured the State Governments to provide Central Para Military Forces at short notice to carry out assault operations.

**Criteria for conferring Padma Awards**

140. PROF. M. SANKARALINGAM: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) what was the criteria for the conferring of Padma Awards;

(b) whether it is a fact that there was a report that persons not recommended by the concerned State Government have been awarded Padma Awards; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE INTHE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI I.D. SWAMI): (a) In terms of the statutes and rules relating to Padma Awards, Padma Vibhushan is awarded for 'exceptional and distinguished service', Padma Bhushan for 'distinguished service of high order' and Padma Shri for 'distinguished service' in any field.

(b) and (c) As per existing practice, recommendations for the Padma Awards are invited from the State Governments/UT Administrations, the Ministries/Departments of the Government of India, Padma Awardees and Institutes of Excellence. However, all recommendations, received from whatsoever source, are placed before the Padma Awards Committee for its consideration. It is, therefore, obvious that persons other than those recommended by State Governments may get the Padma Awards. Out of 93 persons whose names were approved for the Padma Awards for the year 2003,20 were recommended by State Governments.

**Losses due to cold wave in Northern India**

141. SHRI MANOJ BHATTACHARYA: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the whole of Northern India has been under a severe cold wave in the month of January this year;

(b) if so, the details thereof including the casualties as a result of the cold wave, State-wise;

(c) whether keeping in view the magnitude of sufferings and loss of life and its devastating effect on rabi crops, the cold wave could be categorised as a national disaster;

(d) if not, the reasons therefor; and

(e) what relief measures have been offered/are proposed to be offered for ameliorating the sufferings of affected persons?

THE MINISTER OF STATE INTHE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI I.D. SWAMI): (a)Yes Sir, many parts of the Northern India underwent severe cold wave conditions during the current winter season.

(b) There have been reports of deaths due to the cold wave in a number of States. Detailed information regarding this has been asked for from the States and is awaited.

(c) and (d) Cold waves/Heat waves have not been included as natural disasters by the Eleventh Finance Commission for the purpose of providing assistance from Calamity Relief Fund (CRF) and National Calamity Contingency Fund (NCCF).